



City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor

News

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New Families and Education Health Levy Program Launched for Struggling Students

New investment will address health care for some of Seattle's neediest students

SEATTLE – Mayor Mike McGinn today announced the awarding of Families and Education Levy funds to Group Health Cooperative to provide health care services to students in the Seattle Public Schools' Interagency Academy.

"The Families and Education Levy has always been intended to support Seattle's most challenged students" said McGinn. "Interagency Academy has been innovative in meeting the needs of these students, and I'm pleased we can add health services to their program. We are also expanding our partnership with Group Health, which has an excellent record of serving students at other schools."

"Group Health is a national leader in improving the health of adolescents, a traditionally underserved population," said Michael Soman, M.D., Chief Medical Executive of Group Health Physicians. "We know from our experience that school-based health centers are a highly effective way to provide care for adolescents. We're pleased to have our multi-disciplinary team of physicians, nurse practitioners and mental health professionals working directly in the Interagency Academy, helping us reach busy teens with care that works for them."

School Based Health Centers have been funded by the Levy since it was first passed in 1990. All comprehensive high schools have health clinics, along with five middle schools, four elementary schools, and the Seattle World School which serves recent immigrant and refugee students. The citizen advisory committee that recommended renewal of the Levy proposed extending these services to students at the Interagency Academy.

Interagency is an alternative high school with multiple locations throughout Seattle. It is designed for students whose needs have not been met in traditional comprehensive schools. Interagency partners with community-based organizations to provide unique learning environments with targeted interventions to best serve its student population. In addition to formal school-sponsored, on-site partnerships, many students also interact with chemical dependency and mental health professionals, probation officers, and case managers.

Compared to other Seattle public high schools, Interagency serves a higher proportion of students eligible for free/reduced lunch and special education services. In addition, students at Interagency are generally less likely to meet standard on state academic tests and are more likely to drop out of school compared to their district peers. Interagency has high student turnover, and most students enrolled in the fall were enrolled at a different school the previous year. In 2011, many students reported experiencing antisocial behaviors and emotional and behavioral difficulties. Despite these challenges, many students also reported that Interagency recognizes their efforts and contributions at school.

Interagency students' health needs are similar to other adolescents. However, their unmet health needs often coincide with other life challenges including unstable housing and gang concerns.

A review panel that included health care professionals selected Group Health as the provider and awarded \$273,680 to the organization for the 2013-14 school year.

Public Health – Seattle & King County will manage this important Families and Education Levy investment and the partnership with Group Health.

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